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AUTHOR Spann-Hite, Tracy; Picklesimer, Billie K.; Hamilton, Gloria J.

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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the outcomes of a study designed to assess teacher attitudes about an interdisciplinary approach to the inclusion of students with behavior disorders. The interdisciplinary approach involved four components: responsible inclusion, language intervention strategies, self-management programs, and pragmatic skills for classroom teachers. A survey of attitudes toward the theory and practice of inclusion was completed by 37 regular education teachers, special education teachers, and a speech-pathologist serving children ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade. Results from the survey indicate that the majority of participants agreed that inclusion should consist of educational teaming that involves a collaborative classroom method and a special education teacher as part of the classroom. Participants indicated that cooperative learning was vital to inclusion, a whole language curriculum was effective, and storytelling was an important part of the curriculum. Just over half of the participants indicated they employ the point-and-level system of classroom management (a token economy with increasing levels of privileges). The majority of participants agreed that inclusion should consist of the following: (1) a special education teacher and speech-language pathologist as collaborative partners; (2) the use of self-monitoring classroom management; and (3) the educator's belief in the power to produce a desired effect. Tables with survey outcomes are attached. (Author/CR)

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Teacher Attitudes Toward an Interdisciplinary Approach to Inclusion

Tracy Spann-Hite, School Counselor
Father Ryan High School
700 Norwood Drive
Nashville, TN 37204-3513
spann-hitet@fratherryan.org

Billie K. Picklesimer, Assistant Professor
Psychology Department
Middle Tennessee State University
Box X018
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
bpickles@frank.mtsu.edu

Gloria J. Hamilton, Associate Professor
Psychology Department
Middle Tennessee State University
Box 0097
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
ghamilton@mtsu.edu

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Abstract

This study was designed to assess teacher attitudes about an Interdisciplinary Approach to the inclusion of behaviorally disordered students. The Interdisciplinary Approach involves four components: responsible inclusion, language intervention strategies, self-management programs and pragmatic skills for classroom teachers. A survey of attitudes towards the theory and practice of inclusion was completed by kindergarten through eighth grade teachers in the Southeastern United States. Results indicated that participants agreed with the interdisciplinary definition of inclusion but did not perceive current attempts of inclusion to be highly effective.

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Inclusion

This study was designed to assess attitudes of teachers toward an Interdisciplinary Approach to inclusion for behaviorally disordered students. As of 1990, of the students identified with behavioral disorders, 80% are being served in regular schools with 37% of those being confined to self-contained classrooms (Steinberg & Knitzer, 1990). Child advocates such as the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders are concerned that total inclusion of these students into the regular education classroom will make obsolete the intensive services available in the special education and behavior modification classroom (Cheney & Muscott, 1996). While it would be inappropriate to include all students with behavioral disorders in the regular classroom, the Interdisciplinary Approach to inclusion might provide a viable option for successfully educating behaviorally disordered students in the regular education classroom setting. The Interdisciplinary Approach combines responsible inclusion, language intervention strategies, self-management programs and pragmatic skills for classroom teachers.

Responsible Inclusion

An appropriate alternative to total inclusion is responsible inclusion (Cheney & Muscott, 1996). Responsible inclusion, a community-based placement, prioritizes the needs of the student within an inclusive placement approach. Placement is individualized and does not take place until an adequate assessment of the student has been completed. "Responsible inclusion is a means to an end" (Cheney & Muscott, 1996, p. 110) with the end being the appropriate placement of the child based on his or her unique needs. This approach requires that students with behavioral disabilities are included only when they are able and the necessary support is provided in the

regular classroom. As opposed to responsible inclusion, full inclusion does not recognize the options of community-based placement (Cheney & Muscott, 1996).

Speech and Language Pathologists and Inclusion

An interdisciplinary approach for including students with behavior disorders in the regular education classroom might involve the evaluation of teacher instructional language and student language deficits. Research has found a correlation between student language deficits and student failure. Since 40% to 70% of students identified as having a behavior disorder also have language deficits, it has been suggested that in-class speech and language interventions be implemented (Keefe & Hoge, 1996).

Traditionally, *pull-out programs* have been used to meet the needs of these students (Keefe & Hoge, 1996). *Pull-out programs* for speech and language have been found to have a negative effect on students due to withdrawal from class and the removal from real-life situations. Recent efforts have been made to develop a collaborative program involving the speech-language pathologist (SLP) and the regular classroom teacher. The classroom teacher provides expertise on the curriculum and behavioral expectations while the SLP evaluates language and instructional needs related to communication and comprehension (Keefe & Hoge, 1996).

The first goal of this collaboration model is evaluation of student language comprehension and communication abilities. A questionnaire is completed by the SLP and another individual who is familiar with a specific student's language abilities. The teacher and SLP evaluate the language of instruction, language in textbooks, student attitudes toward the subject and ability to comprehend the language of the text (Keefe & Hoge, 1996). It is important for the teacher to be aware of the constant and frequent shifts in types of interactions and language functions that take

place in the classroom. This is an area where the SLP's expertise would be advantageous. When misbehavior occurs regularly, the SLP and teacher can attempt to identify whether or not there is consistency in language style and if so, whether or not language may be an area of deficit for the student. If a language deficit is identified, the teacher would immediately write instructional goals for the student that would involve the improvement of communication skills used in academic areas and social functioning. These instructional goals could be accomplished by providing a learning environment that was conducive to cooperative learning and whole language thus allowing for group sharing, exploration of unclear information in textual contexts, and positive use of language. The teacher could facilitate this language exchange by modeling appropriate use of language, role playing, prompting, coaching and scripting (Keefe & Hoge, 1996).

Instructional strategies are important to the development of the student's ability to understand the classroom language. Of these strategies, listening comprehension is crucial for the student with language deficits. The use of advanced organizers such as first, second and next along with providing the student a purpose for reading the material might help develop comprehension skills. Once the student has listened to the material, he or she should restate what was learned or understood. During this time, the student could practice additional language skills by repeating the information to a partner or getting clarification on details from a neighbor. Other methods of enhancing comprehension such as using advanced organizers to cue students and listening for the main idea have been suggested by Forster and Doyle (1989).

Pragmatic Skills and Self-Regulation in Inclusion

The final components of the Interdisciplinary Approach are self-regulation and pragmatic skills. By allowing the student the opportunity to regulate his or her own behavior, external

controls are decreased and the child's sense of independence can be fostered. This can be achieved through modeling, providing opportunities for the student to practice responsible decision making, bibliotherapy and emotion sharing.

Self-management, a strategy for development of pragmatic skills, is another method used for successful inclusion. In a 1994 self-management pilot program, students who had been identified as emotionally behavioral disordered and placed in a special education class were trained in self-management procedures. Self-management was found to be an acceptable alternative to other classroom discipline methods, especially with the emotionally behavioral disordered population (Kern, Dunlap, Childs, & Clarke, 1994).

Kauffman and Wong (1991) posited that traditional or generic methods of classroom discipline may not be effective with all populations and that it may be necessary for teachers to employ alternative methods. It is believed by some educators that the same discipline methods used for other students will be effective for special education students. Other teachers of students with behavioral disorders, however, have found success employing different methods such as increased self-efficacy, prevention of misbehavior, and awareness of the effects of teacher behavior and attitudes (Kauffman and Wong, 1991).

Pragmatic skills should be addressed throughout the educational process. The teacher might make each student aware of guidelines for communication in the classroom versus those for other settings. By teaching acceptable turn taking and conversational skills and allowing students with behavioral disorders to practice these skills in a safe setting, the teacher and SLP may effectively help those students develop necessary academic and social skills. Such efforts could be

enhanced by extending the pragmatic theory to involve classroom management techniques, specifically self-management (Keefe & Hoge, 1996).

The Classroom Teacher's Role in Inclusion

Teachers must maintain a high sense of self-efficacy (Kauffman & Wong, 1991). A self-efficacious teacher would be characterized as having the ability to accept student misbehavior with confidence that he or she could change student behavior. Additionally, the teacher would consider prevention of misbehavior to be as important as the way they respond to misbehavior (Meadows, Melloy, & Yell, 1996).

While the teacher's self-efficacy is an important element in the success of including students with behavioral disorders, the teacher's attitude about authority is equally as important. The effective teacher does not run the classroom in a oppressive manner, yet he or she does not apologize for authority. Instead, the teacher communicates clearly what is and is not acceptable and consistently follows through with stated consequences. Classroom rules are stated clearly, positively and are limited in number (Meadows, Melloy & Yell, 1996).

In addition to attitudes, teacher behavior is another key element to prevention of misbehavior. Effective teachers are aware of what is happening in the classroom and they maintain student involvement in the lessons. Teachers sustain student attention by using methods such as giving clear instructions, pacing appropriately, giving feedback and making smooth transitions (Meadows, Melloy & Yell, 1996).

The classroom atmosphere should be positive and safe. Listening to students helps develop a positive atmosphere and good teacher-student relationships. Disapproval should be communicated through the assignment of consequences aimed toward inappropriate behaviors.

Reinforcement and rewards in the form of meaningful praise should be used frequently when students behave in a controlled manner. To be most effective, teachers model self-discipline and respect (Meadows, Melloy & Yell, 1996).

This paper has presented several methods for helping the behaviorally disordered student achieve success in the classroom. While individually each method has been demonstrated to be effective, the authors propose that a combination of two or more would be equally or more likely to produce a positive outcome. This study involved surveying classroom teachers to determine their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences with inclusion classroom and teaching techniques. Students with disabilities present great challenges for regular and special education teachers. By implementing, in combination, the methods mentioned, students might develop necessary behavioral and social skills, achieve academic success and be included in the regular classroom. Results from this study provide information concerning teacher attitudes about an interdisciplinary approach to inclusion.

Method

Participants

Speech-language pathologists, special education teachers and regular education teachers participated in this study. Each of the 37 participants had served children ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade in their respective districts. The survey showed that 33 held bachelor's degrees, 2 held master's degrees and 2 had post-graduate degrees; 10 were employed in inner-city schools, 15 in suburban schools and 3 in a rural setting. The responses of the 37 participants who have been involved in inclusion were analyzed and are reported in this study

Instrument

The survey used in this study is a self-report, opinion questionnaire. It was designed by the primary author to evaluate the attitudes of teachers toward inclusion. Participants were asked to respond to 20 items requiring them to disclose their current practices of inclusion, opinions regarding inclusion and a proposed interdisciplinary approach.

The majority of the items were rated on a scale ranging from strongly agree (a) to strongly disagree (d). Sample survey items included *Inclusion is beneficial for all students* and *Behavioral disorders may be the result of language deficits*. The one item requiring a "yes" or "no" answer was, *Does your school have an inclusion planning team that consists of teachers, administrators, central office personnel, parents and community members?*

Procedures

Each participant completed a questionnaire that was designed to determine which teaching methods were currently being used by the participant. In addition, opinions regarding the willingness of the participant to employ the combination of proposed methods, and the participant's personal opinions regarding the effectiveness of these methods were solicited. In order to obtain a random sample representative of the professional educational population, the questionnaire was distributed to special education teachers, regular education teachers and speech-language pathologists who were attending graduate school in the Southeast.

Results

Descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, means and standard deviations were determined for survey items. Correlational analyses were run on survey responses. Responses by percentages to selected survey items are presented in tables one through four.

Item # 7 correlates with #12 (*Inclusion is beneficial*), $r = .40$, $p = .015$. Item #7 correlated with #13 (*The needs of the behaviorally disordered can be met through inclusion*), $r = .40$, $p = .019$. Item #7 correlated with #17 (*Cooperative learning is vital to inclusion*), $r = .34$, $p = .041$. Item #8 correlated with #17, $r = .40$, $p = .016$.

Item #9 correlated with #27 (*It is necessary to use collaborative methods of inclusion*), $r = .37$, $p = .023$. Item #11 correlated with #18 (*Whole language curriculum is effective with inclusion*), $r = .33$, $p = .049$. Item #11 correlated with #21 (*Self-monitoring sheets are effective for class management*), $r = .34$, $p = .046$. Item #12 correlated with #20 (*The point and level system of class management is used*), $r = .39$, $p = .019$.

Item #13 correlated with #17 (*Cooperative learning is vital*), $r = .35$, $p = .036$. Item #16 correlated with #19, $r = .39$, $p = .017$. Item #16 correlated with #23, $r = .38$, $p = .020$. Item #25 correlated with #18 (*Whole language curriculum is effective with inclusion*), $r = .41$, $p = .012$.

Item #25 correlated with #23 (*Students are aware of consequences*), $r = .32$, $p = .050$. Item #17 correlated with #19, $r = .33$, $p = .048$. Item #27 correlated with item #17, $r = .37$, $p = .026$. Item #27 correlated with #21, $r = .34$, $p = .040$, and item #27 correlated with #24 (*Immediate compliance should be a posted rule*), $r = .32$, $p = .050$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain teacher opinion regarding an interdisciplinary approach to inclusion with behaviorally disordered students. The majority of participants in this study were regular education teachers with a small representation from special education teachers and a single representative from speech and language pathology. Most held bachelor's degrees

and have been teaching for at least two to three years. The participants were employed in a variety of settings including inner-city, suburban and rural.

The majority of participants agreed that inclusion should consist of educational teaming that involves a collaborative classroom method and a special education teacher as part of the classroom. There were significant relationships among the beliefs that inclusion should be an educational teaming, that inclusion is beneficial, and that the needs of the behaviorally disordered can be met in an inclusion curriculum. There was a strong relationship between endorsement of the idea that cooperative learning is a vital part of the curriculum and daily involvement of a special education teacher in inclusion. Agreement that a speech-language pathologist should be a regular part of the inclusion classroom correlated with agreement that inclusion should include the following components: a special education teacher and speech-language pathologist working as collaborative partners, the use of self-monitoring in classroom management, and the educator's belief in the power to produce a desired effect.

The idea that inclusion is beneficial and the needs of the behaviorally disordered can be met in the regular classroom received mixed results. Findings were equally balanced between agree and disagree which represented educational ambiguity regarding inclusion. The needs of the behaviorally disordered being met through inclusion and the effectiveness of a whole language curriculum were positively correlated.

Participants indicated that cooperative learning was vital to inclusion, a whole language curriculum was effective and story telling was an important part of the curriculum. The majority agreed that behavioral disorders may be a result of language deficits. Endorsement of this item

correlated with responses regarding the importance of story telling as a part of the curriculum and suggests that story telling may be a method of addressing language deficits.

Just over half of the participants indicated they employ the point-and-level system of classroom management. Participants disagreed whether self-monitoring sheets are effective methods of classroom discipline. Agreement was indicated for: (1) classroom rules should be posted; (2) students should be aware of consequences; and (3) compliance should be one of the posted rules. The majority of participants agreed that prevention of misbehavior, and the way an educator responds to misbehavior are equally important methods. Teachers who believed students should be aware of consequences were confident that they could change student behavior.

The majority of the participants agreed that inclusion should consist of the following: (1) a special education teacher and speech-language pathologist as collaborative partners; (2) the use of self-monitoring classroom management; and (3) the educator's belief in the power to produce a desired effect. These findings indicate support for an Interdisciplinary Approach to inclusion as more desirable than traditional methods. A future study might survey representation from special and regular education teachers, speech-language pathologists and administrators. Data gathered from individuals in administrative positions might provide insight regarding the attitudes of those who set policy.

Findings of this study suggest that current attempts of inclusion are not perceived by educators in the field to be highly effective. While survey results indicated a need for in-service training for inclusion, almost half of the participants answered that no in-service had been made available. Based on theses results there exists a need for in-service training and the implementation of an Interdisciplinary Approach.

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Table 1. Percentages of responses to items assessing agreement with the philosophy of inclusion.

Items		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#7.	Inclusion should involve educational teaming.	45.9	51.4	---	---
#8.	Inclusion should incorporate efforts of a special education teacher as part of the daily routine.	59.5	37.8	2.7	---
#9.	Inclusion should involve regular participation of a speech and language pathologist.	10.8	40.5	45.9	2.7
#12.	Is inclusion beneficial?	21.6	27.0	29.7	21.6
#16.	A behavior disorder can be the result of a language deficit.	13.5	67.6	18.9	---
#27.	Inclusion should involve collaboration between the special education teacher and speech pathologist, the use of self monitoring as classroom management and the educator's belief in the ability to produce the desired effect.	35.1	48.6	16.2	---

Table 2. Percentages of responses to items assessing inclusion practices in participants' schools.

Items		Agree	Disagree
#10.	Does the school have an inclusion team?	100.0	---
#11.	The inclusion team provides structural reorganization for inclusion support.	86.5	13.5
#14.	Inservice is necessary for inclusion.	91.9	8.1
#25.	Do you feel confident in your ability to change student behavior?	75.7	24.3

Table 3. Percentages of responses to classroom management survey items.

Items		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#13.	Can the needs of the behaviorally disordered be met in inclusion?	8.1	48.6	35.1	8.1
#20.	I employ the point and level system of classroom management.	18.9	37.8	27.0	13.5
#21.	Self-monitoring sheets are effective methods of classroom management.	8.3	31.5	9.5	49.3
#22.	It is important for classroom rules to be posted.	73.0	27.0	---	---
#23.	Students should be aware of the consequences for choosing not to follow classroom rules.	86.5	13.5	---	---
#24.	Following directions immediately should be one of the posted classroom rules.	56.8	29.7	5.4	8.1
#25.	I am confident that I can change student misbehavior.	16.2	59.5	24.3	---

Table 4. Percentages of responses to survey items assessing attitudes towards teaching techniques.

Items		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#17.	Cooperative learning techniques are considered vital methods of classroom instruction.	54.1	40.5	5.4	---
#18.	Whole language curriculum is an effective part of student learning.	16.2	62.2	21.6	---
#19.	Story telling is an important part of an educational curriculum.	43.2	51.4	2.7	---